

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

More than 70 cross-sector leaders have joined The Strive Partnership and the Northern Kentucky Education Council (Council) to launch a multi-year, multi-dimensional campaign in seven counties, two states, and 19 school districts to significantly improve 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading success, and sustain that success through the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. These leaders have come together based on a core belief, rooted in compelling research and data, that early reading success is one of the most relevant academic milestones for young children, and a leading predictor of future academic success, including high school graduation and postsecondary completion rates.<sup>1</sup>

Key regional leaders – including the superintendents from these 19 school districts, community, corporate and private funders who invest in education throughout the region, college and university presidents in both Ohio and Kentucky, business, nonprofit, and faith leaders, as well as parent advocates and elected officials – have been working together to improve outcomes for students, cradle to career, for several years now. They have come together as part of United Way’s Success by 6® Initiative (SB6) and the Council’s Action Team 1, which focus on early learning and development, The Strive Partnership, which focuses on the urban core, and the Council itself, which is the leadership organization for alignment of education initiatives and programs for six counties and 18 districts in Northern Kentucky.<sup>2</sup> These leaders have a proven ability to deliver results through collaborative action based on common measures, including kindergarten readiness and early grade-level reading, data-informed decision-making, and the willingness to align funding to what works.<sup>3</sup>

Third grade reading rates in our region have been trending upward by 2.5% a year for the past five years. Baseline data for the 2010-11 school year for our region show 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading rates of 70% in Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS; compared to 80% in the state of Ohio) and 82% in Northern Kentucky (compared to 81% in Kentucky). However, for disadvantaged students, early reading success is much lower. Only 65.7% of low-income students in CPS are proficient in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading vs. 86.3% of all other students.

The campaign will work to accelerate this progress and has set an ambitious goal that every child will be reading successfully by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade by 2020. We will do so by:

- Targeting disadvantaged students and high need schools;
- Pursuing collaborative action in key areas: school readiness, attendance, summer learning;
- Building broad-based community will and expanding existing volunteer efforts (i.e. coordinated tutoring);
- Establishing new and focused district synergy around early reading success and school attendance;
- Committing to ongoing data collection and analysis to support the entire work of the campaign;
- Further aligning advocacy and financial resources around what works.

See the campaign’s proposed organizational chart (Appendix A) for further clarification.

Our ambitious goal will require a 5% annual increase in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading rates in Cincinnati, a 2.5% annual increase in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading rates in Northern Kentucky, and a 3% annual growth in school readiness, and a 5% total decrease in absence rates across the region – all of which will be tracked throughout the campaign.

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<sup>1</sup> Research shows that students not reading on grade-level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are four times more likely to drop out. For low-income students, they are 13 times more likely to drop out. In fact, 74% of students not reading successfully by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will not graduate with their class. Every year, more than 80% of low-income children miss this milestone.

<sup>2</sup> Through an alignment process to address the duplication and resource allocation in education the Council of Partners transformed into the [Northern Kentucky Education Council](#). There are approximately forty six communities across the country implementing *Ready by 21* to ensure all youth are ready for college, work and life.

<sup>3</sup> For example, The Strive Partnership released its [2011 Report](#), which offers a promising outlook as 81% of the partnership’s measures, including kindergarten readiness and 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading achievement, are trending in the right direction (vs. 74% last year and 68% two years ago). The work has been highlighted in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* ([Winter 2011](#)) and two *New York Times* blog posts ([March 7, 2011](#); [March 10, 2011](#)). Approximately 50 communities in the country are replicating the Strive framework, and are part of a growing Strive national network of cradle to career education partnerships.

Our region's high level of poverty means targeting low-income students is paramount. Many of these children are transient, often moving from one community in our region to another – a major reason why we are launching a multi-county, two-state campaign. Despite these challenges, we are confident that our region will make even greater progress as a result of this campaign. We have a wealth of best practice programs, committed school and community leaders, an aligned philanthropic and advocacy community, and six, committed institutions of higher education. We also have one of the strongest corporate communities, evidenced by the fact that the United Way of Greater Cincinnati (UWGC) is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest in the country, raising \$60 million a year to invest in what works.

While the region spans two states and multiple counties, we live, work, and play in an interconnected world. Our two plans for economic growth, Agenda 360 and Vision 2015, have embraced this interconnectedness as an asset. They realize that by collaborating across the two states, leaders are able to develop long-term, multi-sector strategies that enable greater success. Through a unique "[Story Project](#)," for example, several themes were developed to underscore our uniqueness, which is in the power of our people and their willingness to work together. Two themes, in particular, capture the strong community spirit and momentum that this campaign will build upon to drive the work to improve 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement, particularly for low-income students.

- 1) **You Can Make a Difference Here.** In our region, if you have a passion for community, and are willing to engage and lead, you can make a difference. We're a perfect sized region for individual impact.
- 2) **Our Heroes are Life-Sized.** Our history is full of stories about average people who rose to the occasion to do something special. Our heroes are not on pedestals, but on the ground, doing the work.

We have also come together as a region in support of six [Bold Goals](#) in education, income, and health – an effort led by our United Way. Over 40 key stakeholders helped to establish these goals, which have now been endorsed by over 110 nonprofits, health & education groups, government entities and corporations. These Bold Goals will be relevant to our campaign, and present a clear example of our commitment to working together for change.

Finally, our community has already rallied around the issue of supporting early childhood learning and development. Driven by the leadership of SB6, the region is making progress to improve kindergarten readiness. For example, school readiness rates in Cincinnati have climbed 13 percentage points or nearly 30% since 2005. Through successful volunteer tutor recruitment efforts such as the Council's signature program, [One to One: Practicing Reading with Students](#) in Northern Kentucky, and through a coordinated tutor recruitment campaign in Cincinnati, [Be The Change](#), we are already leveraging the goodwill of our citizens to support early achievement. Through these existing efforts – as well as the proposed plans outlined in this campaign – we are well positioned to accelerate early reading achievement so all children are reading successfully by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

## ASSURANCE 1 – THE PROBLEM

Data show that poverty has the most significant impact on early grade-level reading success, and Cincinnati has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest rate of child poverty in the country at 48%. This is up from 35.4% in 2005 and is more than double the national average (22% in 2010). Child poverty in Northern Kentucky also outpaces the national average, with 23% of children living below the federal poverty line. Children in poverty are more likely to face barriers to reading success. However, our community believes that every child can read successfully by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and that through a targeted campaign, informed by meaningful data analysis, we can achieve our ambitious goals.

Building on the significant data work of The Strive Partnership, the Council, SB6, and other partners involved in the campaign, including Procter & Gamble (P&G), our school districts, UWGC, Cincinnati Children's Hospital, and INNOVATIONS – a project of Cincinnati Children's Hospital and SB6 partner, we have been collecting and analyzing relevant data as part of this campaign for the past several months. Data analysis for this proposal was also supported through a partnership with one of the world's largest and most respected consulting firms, which has a significant local presence. This data work, as well as the additional data analysis proposed by the campaign, will enable us to better target our interventions to further regional progress around 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading rates.

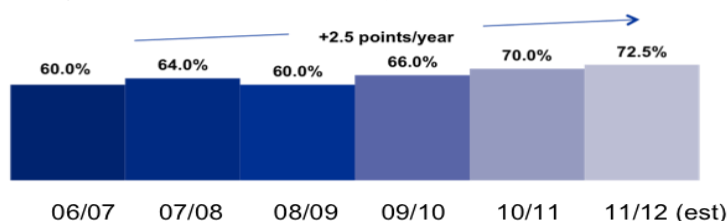
### Baseline Data

Baseline data for the 2010-11 school year in our region show 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading rates of 70% in CPS (compared to 80% in the state of Ohio) and 82% in Northern Kentucky (compared to 81% in the state of Kentucky). Although the current 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading rate for Northern Kentucky appears high, this level is not consistent across the region's 18 districts. For example the range in reading proficiency in schools is 51-97%. As a result, Northern Kentucky has the highest academic performing district in the state as well as 12 schools in eight districts that have been labeled chronically under-performing. These districts, along with the lowest-performing elementary schools in CPS, will be the targets of the early grade-level reading campaign.

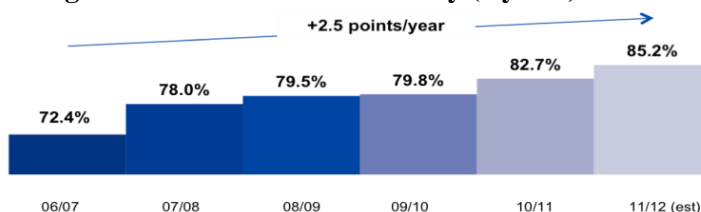
### Third Grade Reading Trends

Throughout the entire region, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading rates have trended upward by 2.5% percent a year for the past five years. Trends for CPS and all 18 Northern Kentucky districts are captured in Figures 1 and 2.

**Figure 1: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Trends in Cincinnati (5 years)**



**Figure 2: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Trends in Northern Kentucky (5 years)**

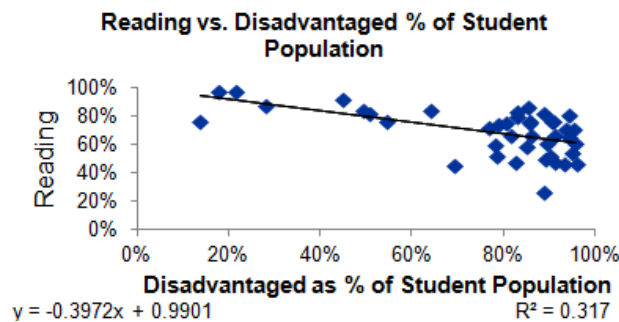


Over the same time period (2006-2011), 3<sup>rd</sup> grade state reading scores have increased by 0.4 points per year in Ohio (from 78% to 80%) and by one point per year in Kentucky (from 76% to 81%).

Although overall growth in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement is trending upward, the rate is not even across all schools and districts in the region. Over the past two years, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading in CPS has trended upward in 73% of schools, and trended downward in 27% of schools. Some schools have shown drops in reading scores of 25%, while others have seen reading proficiency rates rise by over 50%. In Northern Kentucky, 56% of schools have 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading rates trending upward, and 33% have rates trending downward and 11% have remained the

same. While promising, these current trends will not allow us to achieve our goal of every child reading successfully by 2020 (see Figure 7 below).

**Figure 3: CPS Demographic Reading Proficiency Correlations**



Reading proficiency is most strongly correlated with income. Those schools with a large percentage of economically disadvantaged students are more likely to have lower reading proficiency rates (see Figure 3). These findings confirm national trends that link economically disadvantaged status to low 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement and provide evidence of the need to target low-income students with intervention efforts throughout this campaign.

Through targeted intervention in key areas known to influence 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading success, the campaign will focus on the low-income students, their families, the communities in which they reside, and the lowest performing schools to close our reading achievement gaps.

### Kindergarten Readiness

Data collected and analyzed by SB6, CPS, and INNOVATIONS over the past several years show a compelling correlation between kindergarten readiness and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading (see Table 1).

**Table 1: 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders in 2010-11: Reading OAA Scaled Scores and Corresponding KRA-L Points**

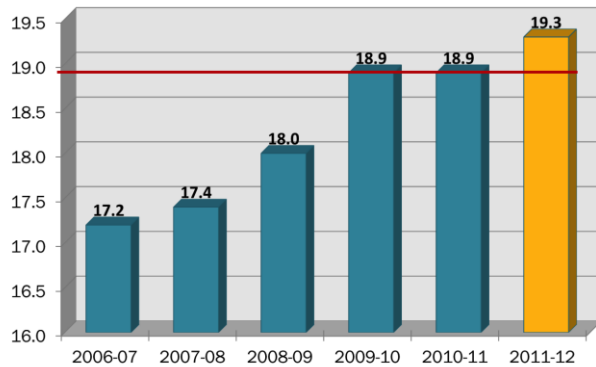
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading OAA 2010-11		KRA-L Score 2007-08					
		Band 1 (0-13)		Band 2 (14-23)		Band 3 (24-29)	
Below Proficient	Limited	22.2% (89)	46.1% (185)	10.4% (73)	28.3% (198)	2.5% (11)	9.9% (44)
	Basic	23.9% (96)		17.9% (125)		7.4% (33)	
Proficient and Above	Proficient	23.4% (94)	53.9% (216)	27.5% (192)	71.8% (501)	14.4% (64)	90.1% (399)
	Accelerated	17.5% (70)		28.8% (201)		29.3% (130)	
	Advanced	13.0% (52)		15.5% (108)		46.3% (205)	
Total		100% (401)		100% (699)		100% (443)	

Correlation Scores:  $r = .453$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $N = 1491$ , the number of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders with both KRA-L and OAA scores)

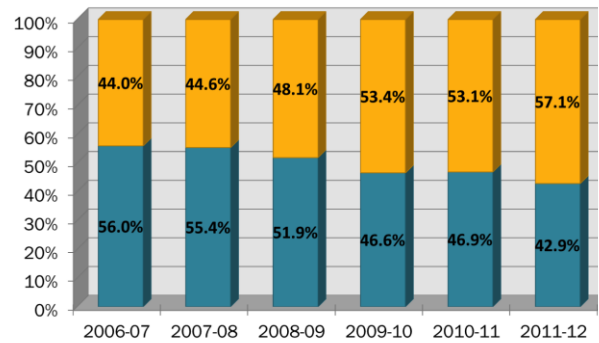
Correlation Categories:  $r_s = .386$ ,  $p < .001$  ( $N = 1543$ , the number of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders with both OAA performance categories and KRA-L bands). This data does not include students who were not promoted to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

**Baseline (Cincinnati):** The state of Ohio uses the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment in Literacy (KRA-L) to provide a standard measure for kindergarten readiness. SB6 considers a student to be “ready” with a KRA-L score of 19 or higher. The percentage of students scoring 19 or above on the KRA-L is trending upward and increased 13 percentage points since 2005. In 2011-12 the average KRA-L score for kindergarteners passed the 19 point threshold for the first time since the data have been collected (see Figures 4 and 5).

**Figure 4: Trends in Mean KRA-L Scores**



**Figure 5: Percent “Ready”**



**Baseline (Kentucky):** Kentucky does not currently have a uniform assessment for school readiness, although five of the 18 districts use a common assessment called the DIAL-3. A weighted average of kindergarten readiness in these five districts reveals that 67% of children are “ready” for school.

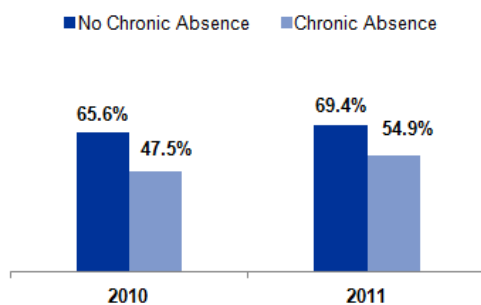
In 2012, Kentucky is seeking to implement a common statewide assessment for kindergarten readiness. A proposed new regulation requires implementation of a common Kindergarten Entry Screener (SCREENER) as a key element of a system of measurement to inform instruction, practices, services, and policies. Data from this screener will provide information to improve school readiness rates and inform education policy in Kentucky. The screener also will reveal trends in kindergarten readiness and enable disaggregated data analysis to identify intervention points (i.e., race, gender, income).

### Attendance

Attendance rates in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky are approximately 95%. However, attendance rates do not capture the same information as a deep-dive into these rates over the course of the school year. The student-level data analysis we did revealed that actual absence rates in CPS range from a low of 2.95% to a high of 8.10%.

Cincinnati students who are chronically absent (missing more than 10% of the school year) tend to underperform

**Figure 6: CPS Chronic Absentee vs. Reading Scores**



relative to those who are not. Figure 6 shows students who miss more days of school have lower 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores than students who attend regularly. In Cincinnati, the analysis showed that economic status has the largest correlation with absence rates. Students with disabilities, males, and African Americans also have a negative correlation with attendance.

A deep dive into the schools with the highest absence rates will be the focus of our upcoming work in the campaign. This analysis will help to identify students who are chronically absent, and how we might address barriers to their attendance.

### Summer Learning

The data on summer learning is limited at this point. Though limited in number, we have identified high-quality model programs in our region for replication, and significant data collection will be underway this summer.

### High School Graduation

National research supports the relationship between 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading and high-school graduation. Cincinnati has made significant progress in improving high school graduation rates. In 2010-11, the graduation rate in CPS was 81.9% (up from 51% in 2000). Additionally, since 2006, the achievement gap in high school graduation between African American and White students in CPS has closed. In 2010, the graduation rate for African Americans was

81.9% vs. 80.7% for Whites. However, the disparities among schools remain large. The highest performing school in CPS has a graduation rate of 98%, while the lowest performing school has a rate of only 28%.

Similarly, the reported rates in Northern Kentucky using the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) show a gap between districts with the highest and lowest graduation rates. The highest-performing district in the region had a 2010-11 graduation rate of 99%, while the rate in the lowest performing district was 52%. The overall rate for the region in 2010-11 was 77%.

### **Further Analysis**

Given the campaign's goal to increase reading achievement among low-income students, the data team plans to extend the current data analysis work by dividing schools in each area (Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky) into thirds and completing an in-depth tertile analysis. Race, gender, and income will be regressed against 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement by tertile to better understand the influence of each on performance. A second analysis will regress kindergarten readiness and attendance against 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading to clarify the drivers of change. This analysis will further reveal target populations, and targeted interventions to better guide the work of the campaign.

However, the key findings from the initial data analysis will inform our work as we get started:

- **Kindergarten Readiness has a significant impact on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading:** Children who enter school prepared are significantly more likely to achieve in school (90% proficiency vs. 54% proficiency).
- **Going to school matters:** Higher rates of absenteeism are correlated to lower 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement locally. The next steps are to dig further into absenteeism and chronic absenteeism at the lowest performing schools to better understand what is happening.
- **Income matters most:** Locally, the correlation of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading with income is stronger than race, confirming national trends that link low-income students to low 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement.

### **Overview of Existing Services and Supports**

Our region is home to a wide variety of programs and services that address each of the key drivers of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading success: school readiness, attendance, and summer learning.

#### ***Kindergarten Readiness***

SB6 has been the flagship initiative for raising awareness of the importance of kindergarten readiness, and aligning the work of providers and other key stakeholders in our region around what works. Programs that fall under their umbrella support strategies ranging from promoting positive childhood development through home visitation, to increasing access to quality early care and education, to public education and engagement.

Three SB6 partners conduct home visitations to reach children of low-income, at-risk parents beginning as early as pregnancy or the first few months of life. **Every Child Succeeds (ECS)** reaches children (age 0-3) of single, low-income, first time mothers who are just learning the parental role. It targets five key indicators in child development related to school readiness: 1) Healthy birth weight and gestational age; 2) Emerging literacy and the creation of a language-rich environment; 3) Social/emotional development; 4) Advocacy by parents, including but not limited to, transition from ECS to a good preschool experience; and 5) Maternal education.

Recently, ECS expanded its efforts by creating a new program, **ECS Transition**, which will help ensure supported families access quality childcare. This effort dovetails with the high-quality work being led by other home visitation organizations in the region. **Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI)** teaches parents to mingle learning and play through developmentally appropriate, structured curriculum children age 3-5. It is an international best practice home visitation model provided by the Brighton Center in Northern Kentucky. Similarly, **Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK)** works with families and schools to support school readiness and the successful transition of children into the education system.

Outside the home environment, it is critically important that children are enrolled in quality rated early childhood education programs. **4C for Children** is the region's leading resource for promoting quality early childhood care



and education. 4C helps parents locate quality early care and education by providing free consumer education and referrals using a comprehensive listing of licensed centers and preschool programs, family childcare homes, Head Start programs, and school-age childcare options. It also creates professional learning communities for early childhood education teachers and childcare directors to share best practices and move rated childcare centers up in quality from one star rating to three or four. These efforts have yielded a 148% increase (245% increase in SW Ohio and 100% increase in Northern Kentucky) in the number of star quality rated early childhood care and education programs in our region.

Quality early care and education also is supported by initiatives that provide professional development for preschool teachers and increase access to books so children enter school prepared to learn. For instance, **Books in Action** is a CPS pre-literacy program that immerses children in books with specific social and emotional themes, and challenges them to incorporate these themes in their everyday interactions. It also supports the professional development of preschool teachers by using creative lesson plans that teach the core competencies of literacy and social-emotional development. **Racing to Read**, a program designed by the Kenton County Public Library in Northern Kentucky contributes to quality early education by increasing access to books for children in Northern Kentucky childcare centers using a mobile library system. Finally, **Transforming Early Childhood through Community Solutions (TECCS)**, is working to increase access to books in Cincinnati's Price Hill neighborhood by leveraging the Reach Out and Read program, in which pediatricians prescribe books at regular checkups.

Beyond home visitation strategies to reach children at birth, and ensuring access to high-quality early care and education, SB6 encompasses programs that equip parents and caregivers with the skills to teach children through everyday interaction, regardless of their own literacy levels. The *bornlearning™ Academies – An Innovative Way to Help Prepare Kids for Kindergarten* in Northern Kentucky helps parents identify everyday learning opportunities for their children. The *bornlearning™ Academies* were inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone's "Baby College" and have been highlighted as a best practice by United Way Worldwide.

Parent and caregiver education about everyday learning also is supported through the work of **Children, Inc.** in Shared Reading – a questioning technique that builds children's vocabulary, expressive language, syntax, and knowledge of print concepts through the re-telling of picture books. Using a train-the-trainer model, Children, Inc. trained three trainers who trained 50 early childhood professionals, who trained 9,000 families in six months.

### **Attendance**

Local data show that mentoring is one of the most effective strategies to reduce student absence by facilitating accountability through supportive relationships. Our region offers a range of mentoring services through several providers. The **Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC)**, **Covington Partners** in Northern Kentucky and **Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Greater Cincinnati (BBBS)**, for example, provide mentoring options such as one-to-one mentoring, after-school group mentoring, and mentoring for children of incarcerated parents. These programs place mentors to serve alongside parents and teachers, often with the support of a professional case manager.

With many of these programs, trained mentors are equipped with the language and skill sets to help improve their mentees' attendance. Strategies may include goal-setting, dialogue about the importance of being in school, and long-term consequences of frequent absenteeism. As a condition of participation in BBBS and CYC, for example, parents sign a document agreeing to make attendance and school academics a priority. Of the 1,300 students who have been served by BBBS, only one has been dropped due to attendance. Data from CPS school attendance records for CYC's program shows encouraging attendance improvement.

For children in the foster care and juvenile justice system, who are not typically eligible for mentoring programs, our region offers **Kids in School Rule!** This is a partnership between CPS and Hamilton County, in which an education specialist from the Hamilton County Job and Family Services Division supports the development and use of enhanced interventions and strategies to promote the school stability and academic success of these students. Critical to this effort is the immediate enrollment of students in school as they transition into foster care.

Through mentoring, programs in our region are providing services that produce outcomes in reducing student absences. Mentoring is not the only proven strategy for reducing absenteeism, and more work is needed.

### Summer Learning

Summer learning opportunities that meet the definition of a true summer learning opportunity – voluntary, full day programs that blend remediation with enrichment activities and more advanced curricula – are limited in our region. We currently lack a sufficient array of services and supports to meet the needs of the entire population.

However, we do have some robust, high-quality model programs. For instance, **Fifth Quarter** is an innovative, five-week, full-day summer learning opportunity provided by CPS. Selected for funding by the Wallace Foundation, Fifth Quarter provides academics in the morning and draws on an existing community-school partnership infrastructure that involves nearly 60 local organizations to provide daily enrichment activities in the afternoon. CPS shares its Fifth Quarter curriculum and materials with other summer learning programs offered by, for example, **Whole Again International** and the **YMCA**.

Additional summer learning opportunities that support the Fifth Quarter framework will be available beginning in summer 2012 through importation of the Children’s Defense Fund’s “**Freedom Schools**” model. Freedom Schools provides summer enrichment through a model curriculum that works in partnership with community-based organizations, schools, and colleges to provide high-quality academic enrichment. A major focus of this model is to boost student motivation to read, generate more positive attitudes toward learning, and connect the needs of children and families to the resources of their communities. We will collect data on each of these efforts to better understand who is receiving services and who is not, as well as which efforts are having the most impact.

Finally, **Summer Bridge** (funded by the United Way Winning Beginnings’ campaign and the Social Innovation Fund) serves four and five year olds in Cincinnati during the summer before they enter kindergarten. Through home visitation, Summer Bridge preserves the impact of the preschool experience and promotes academic stimulation throughout the summer so children maintain and/or increase pre-literacy skills.

### Conclusions

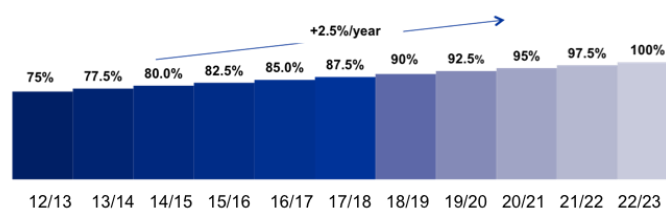
Our region has a robust offering of programs and initiatives to address the key drivers of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading. However, we lack a diversity of programs to address attendance and provide high-quality summer learning opportunities to all students in need. The size of our geographic footprint makes consensus difficult and coordination among programs and providers can be strengthened. Programs often are compartmentalized, even if they align to common goals. The early grade-level reading campaign will help address these challenges using a collective impact strategy to create new cross-sector collaboratives (described in Assurance 3) in attendance and summer learning, and will leverage the existing collaborative effort around early learning led by SB6.

Our region can improve coordination through access to more data, and the innovative systems we have for aggregating and analyzing that data to guide decision-making as well as to track progress.

### ASSURANCE 2 – GOALS

Our region has rallied around the belief that, by 2020, every child can be reading on grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. With the help of excellent teachers, principals, and strong supports in place at the districts, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading throughout the region has been trending upward at an annual rate of 2.5% for the past five years. However, the low baseline of reading achievement in Cincinnati (70%) and the disparities between high- and low-performing districts throughout the region means progress needs to accelerate. If CPS maintains a consistent growth rate, it will take until 2022-23 in the best- case scenario to meet our 100% goal (see Figure 7).

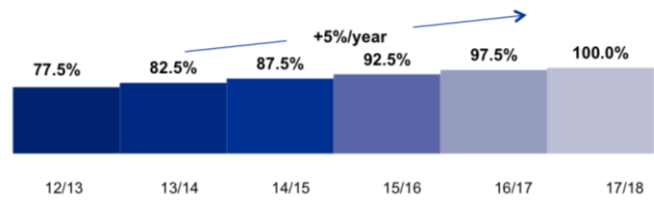
**Figure 7: Consistent Growth Scenario in CPS**





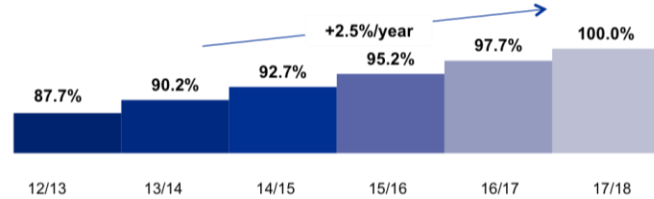
Achieving 100% 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency by 2020 requires doubling the current annual rate of improvement in CPS from 2.5% to 5% (see Figure 8). Theoretically, such growth will meet our 100% goal by school year 2017-18, but we have set the goal for 2020, recognizing that growth likely will not be consistent every year, and will encounter dips and plateaus throughout the campaign.

**Figure 8: Annual Growth Needed to Reach 100% in CPS by 2020**



Northern Kentucky has a higher baseline for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading (82%), and achieving the same 5% annual growth would allow us to meet the goal of 100% proficiency as early as 2014-15. Given Northern Kentucky’s broad range of performance among districts (from high scoring suburban districts to low scoring districts in the urban core), however, we have determined an annual growth of 2.5% to be more appropriate (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Annual Growth Needed to Reach 100% in Northern Kentucky by 2020**



The early grade-level reading campaign is targeting economically disadvantaged students in both Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. The goals for annual growth are different in the two states, but reaching students in our most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and districts will require the same high-impact strategies and interventions to generate results in kindergarten readiness, attendance, and summer learning across the region.

Our goals for each driver of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading are:

- **Kindergarten Readiness:** In Cincinnati, 57% of children were kindergarten “ready” in 2011-12, compared to 67% of children in the five Northern Kentucky districts that use a standardized measure. Our regional Bold Goal for education aims to have 85% of children prepared for kindergarten by 2020. To contribute to this goal, SB6 – a key leader in the early grade-level reading campaign – has set a kindergarten readiness goal of 3% growth per year.
- **Attendance:** Though attendance rates throughout our region are high (approximately 95%), the early grade-level reading campaign will target absence rates, particularly in low-income districts where absences tend to be high. We have set a goal to reduce total absence rates by 5%. This will help close the gap between CPS schools with the highest and lowest absence rates.
- **Summer Learning:** Our ultimate goal is to ensure every child in need has access to a high-quality summer learning opportunity, but setting quantifiable goals remains a challenge. We must first identify the range of summer learning programs in our region, and the impact of those programs on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading. This is work we will be undertaking in the first six months of the campaign.

We believe these ambitious, but achievable goals, will enable us to build a community in which every child is reading on grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Achieving them by 2020 will require accelerating our current growth through carefully devised strategies and connections with a range of supplemental supports.

### **ASSURANCE 3 - STRATEGY**

Collective impact will be the central strategy used in our region to target the key drivers of early grade-level reading: kindergarten readiness, school attendance, summer learning, volunteer and parent engagement, building broad-based community will, district synergy, aligned and pooled funding around what works, ongoing data collection and analysis, and coordinated state advocacy. Our collective impact strategy has four key components: a shared community vision, evidence-based decision-making, collaborative action, and investment and sustainability. Implementing collaborative action for collective impact ensures existing and new resources are repurposed to focus on strategies that produce results. In the process, the community begins to take ownership for education results, as opposed to assuming this is the role of a few core institutions.

The collective impact model is more robust than a traditional collaborative approach to making a large-scale impact in any area of complex social change. It requires a highly intentional process, facilitated by a trained coach, and includes creating a team charter (a carefully-constructed, mutually agreed-upon compact that guides the work) and a detailed action plan to drive impact. Many of the existing work groups (described here and in Assurance 6) that helped to build this proposal— kindergarten readiness, school attendance, summer learning, community will, aligned funding and advocacy, and data collection and analysis – will form collaboratives around the key strategies of the multi-year early grade-level reading campaign.

To begin their work, each collaborative will create its team charter and then leverage a continuous improvement process to create a detailed action plan (see Appendix D). Called “DMAIC”, the process includes the following:

- 1) **Define:** Members define problems, objectives, and partners
- 2) **Measure:** Members establish a baseline of current performance and set improvement goals
- 3) **Analyze:** Members determine major causes and factors contributing to performance and outcomes
- 4) **Improve:** Members will identify and implement improvements
- 5) **Continuously Improve:** Members will monitor and maintain improvements

The result of this process is a document that states the shared community vision, long- and short-term goals, progress measures for agreed-upon indicators, provides a timeline for action, and assigns responsibility for action steps to individual team members. The collaboratives will come together regularly throughout the campaign to monitor progress and ensure shared accountability. The campaign’s cross-sector Leadership Team, consisting of representatives from more than 70 organizations, will monitor the collaboratives’ work throughout.

Efforts to monitor progress across the collaboratives will be aided significantly by the use of a unique data platform called the Learning Partner Dashboard (LPD)<sup>4</sup>. This comprehensive data management system was developed in partnership with CPS, The Strive Partnership, P&G, and Microsoft. The LPD uses PowerSchool and Infinite Campus to connect student-level school and nonprofit, service-provider data to paint a more comprehensive picture of the range of services that a student may or may not be receiving at any given time. The LPD tracks attendance and flags students who are at-risk of becoming chronically absent once they have missed five school days in a year. It also can track participation in summer learning programs and their impact. Finally, efforts are under way to better share data between early childcare providers and school districts in both states.

### **Kindergarten Readiness**

The research is clear: from conception to kindergarten (“0-5”), a child’s brain development progresses faster than at any other stage of life. By the age three, 85% of the brain's core structure is formed, and 90% of brain growth occurs by age five. Yet, the vast majority of public spending on education and children occurs after the age of five. Moreover, there are striking disparities between low- and middle-income children during this critical

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<sup>4</sup> For a screen shot of the Learning Partner Dashboard, see Appendix F.

formative time. According to one study, by age three, children of professional parents had vocabularies of about 1,100 words, and children living in poverty had vocabularies of about 525 words.

Our region is committed to moving the needle on school readiness. Since 2002, UWGC has led this work through its SB6 initiative. SB6 has developed strong cross-sector collaboratives in both Ohio and Kentucky. SB6 will continue to lead this collaborative work in the early grade-level reading campaign.

SB6 plan, which will be supported by the campaign, focuses on four key strategies: 1) best practice home visitation; 2) access to quality early care and education; 3) public education and engagement; and 4) utilizing data to assess kindergarten readiness. Program providers are working in each strategy area (see Overview of Existing Services in Assurance 1) to increase kindergarten readiness in our region.

The work around these strategies, although key, is compartmentalized, and connectivity between programs and strategy areas is limited. Accelerating progress will require closer alignment of programs and services across the entire early childhood continuum. Success depends on data following children as they transition from their home environment, to childcare centers and preschools, then kindergarten and elementary school. For example, current data sharing is limited between pre-school and school-age providers and schools. Each entity collects significant data, yet they have not mastered the manner in which they will share data along the learning continuum.

SB6 is working toward improved data sharing through expansion of Ready Schools, an Ohio effort to align curriculum assessments, and expectations from preschool to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to bridge the early childhood divide. Existing SB6 Ready School initiatives in Southwest Ohio can be models for developing partnerships between early childhood programs and elementary schools in Cincinnati. Their collaborative is committed to pursuing effective new approaches that will further connect their work. In Kentucky, the Department of Education (KDE) has developed curriculum that align the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards for three-and-four-year-old children with the Kentucky Core Academic Kindergarten Standards in both Mathematics and English/Language Arts.

As their data collection and sharing work continues, SB6 will have the information necessary to further:

- 1) Identify gaps in existing services;
- 2) Align existing kindergarten readiness efforts;
- 3) Develop criteria for defining best-in-class programs;
- 4) Create a plan to scale evidence-based programs and models that are working in our region; and
- 5) Research programs and practices with proven outcomes that can be replicated in our region.

Among other things, the campaign's support of SB6 creates a tremendous opportunity to further scale programs that work and drive broad-based community will for early learning and development. Although kindergarten readiness has trended strongly upward for the past five years, 43% of children in Cincinnati, and 33% of children in Northern Kentucky are not prepared for school.<sup>5</sup> This campaign, and the great work of SB6, will help us further improve kindergarten readiness so every child enters school prepared.

### **Attendance**

Too many students in our region, particularly low-income students, face barriers to regular school attendance. Their challenges include chronic tardiness and poor access to transportation, lack of clean clothes, domestic problems, parental incarceration, poor dental health, and chronic illnesses such as asthma. While we have not fully grasped the prevalence of chronic absenteeism in our region, national data show that every year, one in ten kindergarteners and first grade students miss a month or more of school due to excused and unexcused absences. Chronic absenteeism (defined as missing 10% of a school year, or 18 days in a 180-day year) puts students at increased risk of failure and drop out. Learning loss due to absence (excused or unexcused) is particularly pronounced for low-income students who may not have the same opportunities for learning at home.

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<sup>5</sup> Kentucky does not currently have a uniform assessment for school readiness, although five of the 18 districts use a common assessment called the DIAL-3. A weighted average of kindergarten readiness in these five districts reveals that 67% of children are "ready" for school.

Unfortunately, the structure of state reporting mandates for attendance in our region mean most schools place their focus on tracking school-wide attendance and truancy. This limited focus is distracting from the bigger issue of chronic absenteeism and the importance of analyzing patterns in absences to help identify targeted strategies.

Recognizing the need to redirect the focus on attendance to chronic absenteeism as a strategy to impact 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading, the early grade-level reading campaign has responded by creating a cross-sector attendance collaborative. Although there are many strategies to impact chronic absenteeism, our current collective effort has been through a pronounced presence of mentoring providers (see Overview of Existing Services in Assurance 1). Their work has demonstrated results in reducing student absences, but it is not the only effective strategy.

The attendance collaborative will be aligning, under the collective impact framework, around the shared vision of reducing absences. They will create an action plan that sets priority strategies for outcomes in reducing chronic absenteeism. A thorough analysis of data will be key to developing a true understanding of chronic absenteeism. This analysis will provide an understanding of which students are chronically absent and will begin to clarify what their barriers might be. Once the current landscape is mapped, the collaborative will write specific objectives around reducing chronic absenteeism, understanding that it will require an effective grassroots effort.

The attendance collaborative will experiment with innovative approaches that can be embedded in our region's high-poverty neighborhoods. Successful, replicable models for grassroots organizing within and outside our region provide a wealth of experience and expertise for the collaborative to draw upon to gain access to these neighborhoods. In each neighborhood, community- and faith-based organizations, schools, and healthcare providers will be tremendous resources to identify trusted voices. The attendance collaborative will experiment with ways to effectively leverage these voices to support a system that can break down the systemic barriers to regular school attendance. Recognizing that becoming embedded in identified neighborhoods and establishing trust will not take place overnight, commitment to being persistent will be imperative.

### **Summer Learning**

Research shows that children from low-income families typically enter school six months behind their middle-income peers. Even if these two children learn at the same rate during the school year, the low-income student's lack of summer learning and enrichment experiences will cause the gap to widen further. By the time the two students reach the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the low-income student will be nearly three years behind. Access to high-quality summer learning opportunities can help reduce this gap.

Studies show that high-quality summer learning programs have the greatest impact on student achievement when they serve children for at least six weeks, six hours a day and blend engaging academics with enrichment activities. Using this as a working definition, the campaign is committed to focusing efforts on summer learning to impact 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading rates. The campaign's summer learning collaborative will use the collective impact framework to embark on work that has never before been done in our region. They will come together under the shared vision of providing access to high quality summer learning opportunities for all children.

Baseline data on summer learning opportunities in our region is limited. This collaborative will begin by inventorying the number of summer learning opportunities that currently meet the working definition and the number of students they serve. Once baseline data is captured, the collaborative will create an action plan to determine priority strategies that will result in increasing access to high quality summer learning opportunities for all children. The summer learning collaborative will also identify under-served neighborhoods for summer learning that could be aided by the data work of the attendance collaborative. By working in tandem, these two collaboratives could significantly increase student achievement rates in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading.

A vast amount of work lies ahead for the summer learning collaborative, as it remains unclear whether or not many of the region's summer programs meet the working definition for a high-quality summer learning opportunity. In response, the summer learning collaborative will be charged with exploring creative ways to merge existing summer programs (summer school and recreational programs) to provide robust experiences for students in high-poverty, underperforming areas. The collaborative will also be leveraging components of local

models that have been identified as meeting the criteria for high-quality summer learning for replication (e.g., CPS' Fifth Quarter and Children's Defense Fund's Freedom Schools).

Since focusing on strategies that work is crucial to the success of collective impact, the collaborative also will be charged with creating a common evaluation tool to assist in tracking the impact of all summer learning opportunities on student achievement. Data collected from each provider will be entered into the LPD in order to track individual student progress. The summer learning collaborative will meet regularly to monitor data and the impact of strategies in the action plan on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement.

## **Conclusion**

The work of all the collaboratives described above will be closely aligned and seamlessly connected throughout the early grade-level reading campaign. To accomplish this, problems need to be addressed at their earliest points. For instance, even though barriers to attendance may not be recognized until a child enters school, they are systemic and complex, and begin impacting a child's life at birth. It is critical for the campaign collaboratives (kindergarten readiness, attendance, and summer learning) to work like gears in a machine and stay in line with the others, through continuous communication and use of innovative technology like the LPD. This cross-collaborative connectivity will result in significant strides for impacting 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement.

## **ASSURANCE 4 – CONNECTING FOR SYNERGY**

The deeply rooted commitment of powerful stakeholders in the community to improving educational outcomes, in partnership with the school districts, will be the engine that drives the early grade-level reading campaign. Our region has been creating connections across community sectors and school districts to drive systemic change for years. The Strive Partnership and the Council have brought superintendents to the table since their inception, and superintendents from all 18 school districts in the Council's footprint provide funding for its collective work. Moreover, district leaders (e.g., superintendents and curriculum advisors) are included as key participants in each of the collaboratives to be launched as part of this campaign. Their presence in the collaboratives, coupled with the work already underway, seamlessly integrates the early grade-level reading campaign with district priorities.

## **Connecting Districts**

Beyond supporting district-community synergy through the collaboratives and the work of The Strive Partnership and the Council, the early grade-level reading campaign hopes to support increased collaboration among districts by creating a District Compact. Superintendents from all 19 school districts in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky will be encouraged to sign a compact signaling their intent to join a professional learning community that will meet regularly to share best practices around improving early reading success and eradicating chronic absenteeism. We hope the compact will also lead to a shared commitment to further early reading success, track and report chronic absenteeism, and develop aggressive plans to use data and best practices to improve both reading and attendance rates. With the planned expansion of LPD to a national platform, additional districts in Northern Kentucky will have the option to use LPD, which could further invigorate the work of this proposed learning community. In the interim, the districts in NKY without LPD will continue to use Infinite Campus, which houses the Persistence to Graduation Tool.

## **Connecting to Policies**

Our region's active kindergarten readiness work supports the work plan coming out of the recent Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund in Ohio. Of the ten states awarded with Race to the Top grants, Ohio was granted the highest award of \$70 million. The key areas for Ohio's grant are 1) measuring outcomes and program quality; 2) increasing availability of high-quality preschool programs; 3) promoting early learning and development outcomes; 4) developing a successful statewide system with a reform agenda around early learning; and 5) setting new professional standards for early childhood educators. This grant presents an exciting opportunity to grow and further align the work being led by SB6.

In Kentucky, the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) will work to unite stakeholders behind common strategies, standards, and goals for Kentucky's early childhood system and advocate for improved quality of early childhood services and improved school readiness. The ECAC, a 26-member bipartisan council, will assess and advocate for the needs of Kentucky's early childhood system, promote accountability of programs in early

childhood, and provide research and guidance on issues that affect Kentucky's children and families. Fortunately for our region, Kentucky's Governor appointed Rick Hulefeld, founder and executive director of Children Inc. in Covington, to serve as chair. Additional members from the NKY community also serve on the ECAC.

### Connecting Volunteers

The Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky region has built strong connectivity between communities and schools. Evidence of this is seen in Community Learning Centers (CLC), a strategy developed over a decade ago in CPS to create schools as the center of community and create alignment between community service providers and schools. CLCs act as hubs for community services, providing access for students and families to health, safety, and social services as well as recreational, educational and cultural opportunities.

Of all the services offered by CLCs, tutoring has been found to be the most effective, with tutors helping students do between 2 and 3 times better on state assessments. Our region is home to multiple district- and community-wide tutoring efforts that provide trained volunteers to reach elementary students of all ages. For students in kindergarten, Making Sense of Language Arts uses multi-sensory techniques to improve phonics and comprehension for those with average receptive ability (ability to listen and receive information) and below average expressive language ability (difficulties with verbal and written expression). For students in grades K-4, the region offers tutoring opportunities through *One-to-One: Practicing Reading with Students* in Northern Kentucky and the Literacy Network of Greater Cincinnati's *Cincinnati Reads* program.

Whiz Kids, a Cincinnati tutoring program led by City Gospel Mission and Crossroads Community Church, along with a multi-partner initiative between CPS, The Strive Partnership, and UWGC called *Be The Change*, support is being provided to students in high need schools. Programs such as Project MORE (a scripted four-day a week K-6 reading intervention program) and *Reading Partners* (an innovative K-5 tutoring curriculum supported by full-time AmeriCorps staff members who coordinate materials and volunteers at each site) will be leveraged to meet additional need. Our campaign will work to better connect these efforts so as to serve more students.

### ASSURANCE 5 – DATA

Table 2 depicts the current data landscape for the region. It indicates which data we currently have and whether it can be disaggregated by race, gender, disability, and economically disadvantaged status. Table 3 indicates who holds each type of data (e.g., kindergarten readiness, attendance, summer learning, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading, and high school graduation) in our region.

**Table 2: Early Grade-Level Reading Campaign: Available Summary Data**

	K-Readiness	3 <sup>rd</sup> Gr. Reading	Attendance Rate	Chronic Absences
<b>Cincinnati, OH</b>				
- by school	√, D	√, D	√, D	√
- by school tertiles	could be done	could be done	could be done	could be done
- by district	√, D	√, D	√, D	√
<b>Northern KY</b>				
- by school	n/a	√, D	√	n/a
- by school tertiles	n/a	could be done	could be done	n/a
- by district	√ (5 districts)	√, D	√	√
- by region	n size too small	√, D	√	√

√ : Data available

D: Able to disaggregate by race, sex, disability, economic disadvantage

**Table 3: Type of Data and Data Holders**

Type of Data	Data Holder
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<b>Kindergarten Readiness</b>	Success by 6 Cincinnati and Success by 6 Northern Kentucky (5 districts); Early Childhood Database housed at Northern Kentucky University (comprised of many partners); Winning Beginnings Database housed at INNOVATIONS in Community Research (comprised of many partners); Cincinnati Public Schools; Newport Independent Schools; and Covington Independent Schools
<b>Attendance</b>	All districts; Strive Partnership (through LPD)
<b>Summer Learning</b>	Cincinnati Public Schools
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading</b>	Ohio Department of Education; Kentucky Department of Education; All districts; Strive Partnership (through LPD); Northern Kentucky Education Council
<b>H.S. Graduation</b>	Ohio Department of Education; Kentucky Department of Education; All districts

### **Ongoing Access to Data**

The Strive Partnership and the Council have developed strong relationships with all 19 school districts over the past several years. Both have longstanding data committees and contacts that have built the trust needed to share the data this campaign will demand at multiple levels – district, school, and student. The Strive Partnership (developed in conjunction with its early childhood, district, and postsecondary partners) has released an annual report card since 2008. This report highlights trends on a set of eight key community level outcome indicators across three cities, five school districts, and multiple postsecondary partners.

We will leverage two unique data tools beyond the districts’ existing student information systems: the Learning Partner Dashboard (LPD) and a regional community data portal that is currently in development. The LPD is a collaborative effort of CPS, The Strive Partnership, Microsoft, P&G, INNOVATIONS, and others. The LPD combines student-level academic data with student-level service provider data (e.g., mentoring, after school, tutoring, and summer learning). It is a unique platform that brings all these data together in one place so schools and partners have a better picture of which students are receiving which services, and their impact. We believe it will fundamentally change how we all work together to best support students. LPD has just recently launched as a tool for Covington, KY, and we envision it could be launched to the broader region in the future.

The regional data portal is a collaborative effort of UWGC, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Haile/U.S. Bank Foundation, The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati, University of Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky University, and The Strive Partnership. The data portal, in beta testing now, is aimed to provide a unified gateway to the social, economic, demographic, education, and health data needs for the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky region. The data portal will allow the broader community to access enhanced data products such as report generation, browsing, data search and discovery, download, analysis, and visualization.

## **ASSURANCE 6 – SUCCESS & SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Building Community Will**

To launch and sustain this work, the leadership team and its partners recognize the need to build broad-based community will, particularly as it relates to the key drivers of early grade-level reading success: school readiness, school attendance, summer learning, and volunteer and parent engagement. A multi-sector collaborative has been convened to refine a multi-year community will campaign targeting the following audiences: parents, childcare providers (center- and home-based), educators (particularly those in target districts and schools), business leaders, policy-makers and elected officials, and other community leaders.

The community will campaign will establish measurable goals and leverage the region’s single media market, with both paid and earned media strategies, as well as pursue the following key activities throughout our effort:

- **Engage Key Stakeholders** – Host initial stakeholder meetings to discuss the campaign’s objective, narrative, and materials. These events will target specific leaders and representatives from target audiences. Meetings will be utilized to refine our collective strategy, identify opportunities to coordinate with ongoing work in the community, recruit campaign “Ambassadors,” and secure key commitments to the community will work.

- **Community Forums** – Several community forums will be held to broaden awareness for the effort, and secure important feedback. These forums will focus on the aforementioned audiences. Community meetings may be co-hosted with a media sponsor to boost participation. As part of these and other events, we will leverage a series of videos on the importance of early learning and development: [http://www.cincyschoolzone.com/subindex/daycare/daycare\\_news](http://www.cincyschoolzone.com/subindex/daycare/daycare_news).
- **Campaign Ambassadors** – Work with stakeholders and the faith-based community to identify “Ambassadors” rooted in high-poverty neighborhoods who understand the needs and assets of parents and providers, as well as the community culture and challenges, and who can help identify barriers. Ambassadors will have a network in their neighborhood, and can help determine how to break through barriers to work with others in the community to reach parents and providers. The goal will be to create an army of campaign ambassadors who can be deployed to reach target audiences.
- **Business Roundtables** – Work with the regional Chambers of Commerce (Greater Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky, African-American, European American, and Hispanic) to bring local business leaders together to learn more about the campaign, and gain commitment for leadership support.
- **“ReadAloud 15 Minutes” Campaign** – Leverage a single parent engagement message: “Read Aloud: 15 Minutes, Every Child, Every Parent, Every Day.” In so doing, we will be the first community in the nation to commit to a decade-long “ReadAloud 15 MINUTES” campaign. In the first year, there will be two major public awareness initiatives: 1) ReadAloud for the National Reading Awareness Month in March, a first introduction of ReadAloud 15MINUTES to the community; and 2) ReadAloud Back to School, Prevent Summer Slide, an effort to remind all families about the importance of reading aloud throughout the summer break and make them aware of the research that exists around “summer slide.” A more programmatic strategy includes a Big Box of Books effort, an initiative to put books into the hands of vulnerable families.
- **Further Volunteer Engagement** – Incorporate into each of these activities the opportunity to collect contact information of people who support the campaign, and who can be encouraged to volunteer as part of ongoing tutor and mentor recruitment efforts (e.g., Be The Change, Reading Partners, Cincinnati Reads, One to One in Northern Kentucky, MentoringWorks). Individuals will also be encouraged to host events, call elected officials, write Letters to the Editor, and call into talk shows.

One promising idea to pursue involves a child’s “Bill of Rights”, which every adult in the region would be encouraged to endorse and support (Appendix E). This will help drive key campaign messages.

- **Earned Media** – Pursue media coverage of various outreach efforts. Seek editorial support from *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Cincinnati Herald*, *Kentucky Post*, and *Northern Kentucky Herald*, and provide Op Ed columns for re-print. We will also create outlet-specific news stories and interviews associated with various community will-based activities. The campaign has already secured the necessary communications capacity to drive an aggressive earned media approach during the next few years.
- **Paid Media** – Initial funder interest exists to support a robust paid communications strategy that would include, but would not be limited to, paid television and radio, billboards, and newspaper ads.
- **Unique Website and Social Media** – As a top online community, a unique webpage will be created with campaign resources, event notices, and volunteer opportunities. The campaign will also utilize social media to further build community will, including a campaign Twitter and Facebook page.

### Aligned and Pooled Funding

Sixteen local philanthropic leaders have been individually interviewed as part of the campaign, and the commitment exists to further align organizational grant-making around evidence-based programs that improve early reading success. In particular, funding alignment will focus on the campaign’s key strategies to improve early grade-level reading: school readiness, school attendance, summer learning, data collection and analysis,

parent and community engagement, and aligned advocacy in Ohio and Kentucky. As part of this strategy, local funders will come together to form a unique cohort focused entirely on early grade-level reading success in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky.

Additionally, funders have expressed interest in raising a multi-year, multi-million dollar fund to 1) invest in what works, 2) close existing gaps, and 3) support a robust community will campaign that includes a paid media strategy. In fact, of the sixteen philanthropic leaders interviewed, 100% indicated that they would be likely or highly likely to make a gift to the campaign, and 86% ranked the campaign as a top priority. As one funder said, “This takes community collaboration to a new level! The idea of a regional campaign is powerful.” With commitments in hand from local funders, we will engage national funders to invest alongside local leaders as part of a potential “Early Grade-Level Reading Fund.”

This work builds on the success of the UWGC’s Winning Beginnings Campaign, which raised over \$7 million to invest in early learning and development, as well as the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Social Innovation Fund (SIF). SIF was part of the inaugural grants of the federal Social Innovation Fund managed by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The local SIF project is being operated as a collaboration of local foundations and other grant-makers, which is collectively matching the federal investment. Following closely with the approach of The Strive Partnership, the local SIF focuses on advancing cradle-to-career outcomes in the urban core of the region - Cincinnati, Ohio and Covington and Newport, Kentucky.

While the SIF was designed to support outcomes from cradle to career, the investments lean heavily towards kindergarten readiness programs. Four of the nine sub-grantees are focused on this outcome and more than 44% of all funding from the SIF is going to advance kindergarten readiness, including Cincinnati Public School’s Books in Action and Summer Bridge programs, Cincinnati Museum Center’s ECSITE program, which works with Head Start teachers to deliver science and scientific inquiry curriculum, childcare center capacity building through The Consortium For Resilient Young Children, and “Transition Coordinators” as part of Every Child Succeeds’ effort to increase the percentage of their families enrolling in quality childcare options.

It should also be noted that partners associated with the campaign have begun to build a set of financial models associated with a tuition credit, or “voucher,” for income-eligible families with young children that can only be used in quality-rated childcare centers and preschools. Once the financial modeling work is complete, leaders will investigate the feasibility of such an initiative.

### **Aligned Advocacy**

The United Way has assumed a leadership role, which the campaign will leverage, in advocating for an aligned public policy agenda around kindergarten readiness and early grade-level reading:

- Integrate and align early learning systems as outlined in Early Learning Challenge Grant applications
- Increase the quality of and investments in early care and education programs
- Develop appropriate program standards for K – 3, particularly as they relate to reading
- Track and report school attendance in ways that allow successful remediation strategies
- Improve and expand out-of-school learning, particularly summer learning

Partners are already working together as part of an aligned public policy, or “advocacy,” approach that engages local, state, and federal policymakers and elected officials.

### **Engaged Leadership**

Over 70 organizations have teamed up to launch the campaign, and a cross-sector leadership team has been formed. See Appendix B for a list of names and organizations, and Appendix C for initial collaborative rosters.

Our region has demonstrated an ability to deliver results through collaborative action, we are aligned to a set of common measures, including kindergarten readiness and early grade-level reading, we are focused on data-informed decision-making, and we are willing to align our collective funding to what works. As a result, we have great confidence that we can achieve our goals, and we are firmly committed to developing the most robust talent pipeline in the country, with a focus on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading success.

## Overview of the CSAP Development Process

There is growing community-wide recognition that sustainable economic development will rest on improving educational outcomes, cradle to career, and we must start with getting kids to school prepared to learn. Our United Way catalyzed this effort in 2002 with the formation of Success by 6<sup>®</sup>, a national strategy focused on improving school readiness through local community organizing and change. Recognizing that kindergarten readiness was a key aspect of long-term academic success, the United Way released the *Agenda for Community Impact* in 2005, and aligned its resources to programs that get results, with a priority placed on school readiness.

The Strive Partnership, formed in 2006, created a cross-sector partnership of key community leaders focused on improving educational outcomes in the urban core, particularly around the initiative's first goal to ensure every child entered kindergarten prepared. In 2009, the Northern Kentucky Education Council created a significant work group, Action Team 1, which is solely focused on plans for preparing children for kindergarten and reducing barriers to student learning. Most recently, the United Way led a community-wide effort to establish "Bold Goals" for the region, beginning with the goal that 85% of young people will be prepared for school by 2020.

Building on the momentum to support early education, over 70 cross-sector leaders from across the region joined forces to develop and launch a multi-year early grade-level reading campaign. A campaign leadership team was formed, which will oversee the work and provide strategic guidance throughout a new multi-year effort. Work groups were also formed, around school readiness, attendance, summer learning, and community will. Throughout the past several months, the campaign's leadership team and various work groups offered specific content and recommendations as the CSAP was being assembled by staff with The Strive Partnership and the Northern Kentucky Education Council. As the campaign launches this summer, existing and proposed collaborative action will be supported by The Strive Partnership and the Northern Kentucky Education Council, as well as the campaign's data team, who will provide ongoing data collection and analysis.

In addition to the activities mentioned above, a data team was assembled, which included multiple partners as well as leaders from one of the world's largest and most respected consulting firms, which has a significant local presence. This team met weekly, and was charged with identifying data that would best illustrate the current situation and recent trend lines for our region. Dealing with such a large area which includes two states, seven counties, and 19 school districts created challenges around analyzing multiple sources of assessment data. For example, Kentucky does not have a common Kindergarten readiness assessment at this time. Some of the districts in Kentucky use the DIAL-3, others do not. Ohio schools use the KRA-L to assess kindergarten readiness. The difficulties within the state of Kentucky of not having a common assessment, coupled with the differences between the DIAL-3 and the KRA-L made it challenging to paint a true picture of the current situation around school readiness for the entire region. Similar data collection issues exist within the other strategies.

Finally, The Strive Partnership's Advocacy and Funding Alignment Strategy Team hired an independent consulting firm to interview over a dozen key funders to gauge their interest in launching a multi-year, multi-million dollar fund to support the campaign's priorities, and what works, 0-9. Of the sixteen philanthropic leaders interviewed, 100% indicated that they would be likely or highly likely to make a gift to the campaign.

Although the region for the campaign is vast in size, which creates multiple challenges around issues such as data collection and analysis, program equity, and efforts to scale promising initiatives, our regional approach does provide multiple benefits that will be leveraged as we move forward. For example, we will leverage the region's single media market to pursue a coordinated and robust community will and advocacy agenda.